



This week we experienced our first winter weather for the season. Work, school, and extra activities were interrupted for a brief period of time and icy roads made travel a risk. With most of winter ahead of us it is important to be prepared to continue as much of our normal routine as possible. Be familiar with your agency's inclement weather policy and know if you are able to continue your work from home. In this issue of ACOOP News we will look at how you can prepare yourself and your families for this winter season.

Before Winter Storms and Extreme Cold

Add the following items to your disaster supplies kit:

- **Rock salt** to melt ice on walkways.
- **Sand** to improve traction.
- **Snow shovels** and other snow removal equipment.

Prepare Your Home and Family

- **Prepare for possible isolation in your home** by having sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- **Winterize your home** to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
- **Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter** for your family, neighbors, livestock or equipment. Clear rain gutters, repair roof leaks, and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.
- **Insulate pipes** with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.

- **Keep fire extinguishers on hand**, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.
- **Learn how to shut off water valves** (in case a pipe bursts).
- **Know ahead of time what you should do to help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees.**
- **Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof** to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow - or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work.

Prepare your car

- **Check or have a mechanic check the following items on your car:**
 - **Antifreeze levels** - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.
 - **Battery and ignition system** - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.
 - **Brakes** - check for wear and fluid levels.
 - **Exhaust system** - check for leaks and crimped pipes and repair or replace as necessary. *Carbon monoxide is deadly and usually gives no warning.*
 - **Fuel and air filters** - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas.
 - **Heater and defroster** - ensure they work properly.
 - **Lights and flashing hazard lights** - check for serviceability.
 - **Oil** - check for level and weight. Heavier oils congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.
 - **Thermostat** - ensure it works properly.
 - **Windshield wiper equipment** - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid level.
- **Install good winter tires.** Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require that to drive on their roads, vehicles must be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

- **Maintain at least a half tank of gas** during the winter season.
- **Place a winter emergency kit in each car** that includes:
 - a shovel
 - windshield scraper and small broom
 - flashlight
 - battery powered radio
 - extra batteries
 - water
 - snack food
 - matches
 - extra hats, socks and mittens
 - First aid kit with pocket knife
 - Necessary medications
 - blanket(s)
 - tow chain or rope
 - road salt and sand
 - booster cables
 - emergency flares
 - fluorescent distress flag

Dress for the Weather

- **Wear several layers** of loose fitting, lightweight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent.
- **Wear mittens**, which are warmer than gloves.
- **Wear a hat.**
- **Cover your mouth** with a scarf to protect your lungs.

Above article source: http://www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/wi_before.shtm

FEMA Urges Residents To Be Cautious This Holiday

The holiday season is an especially critical time for fire safety. According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), heating and cooking are the leading causes of residential building fires. Heating fires occur more often in the winter months when the use of central heating systems, portable heaters, and fireplaces is most common. The numbers of cooking fires routinely start to increase around Thanksgiving and peak in December.

FEMA encourage residents to use extra caution as they celebrate this holiday season.

Below are some tips for a safer holiday:

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

- Trees: Select a fresh tree, sticky to the touch with green needles. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If needles fall off, the tree is already dry and a fire hazard. Don't place tree near a heating vent or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Keep the tree stand filled with water. Alternatively, consider using a flame-retardant artificial tree.
- Lights: Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory. Don't overload electrical outlets and don't link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Don't leave lights unattended.
- Decorations: All decorations should be nonflammable or flame-retardant and placed away from heat vents.

OTHER SAFETY TIPS

- Do not leave cooking food unattended. Keep all cooking surfaces clean.
- Shut off all appliances before leaving.
- Ensure the propane stove is off after cooking.
- Do not trap electric cords against walls where heat can build up.
- Never smoke in bed. Do not use an open flame as a flashlight.
- Take extra care when using portable heaters. Keep bedding, clothes, curtains and other combustible items at least three feet away from space heaters.
- Only use Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) approved electric blankets and warmers. Check to make sure the cords are not frayed.
- Ensure fire extinguishers, fire alarms, and smoke detectors are in working order.

For other fire safety tips, visit the USFA Web site at www.usfa.dhs.gov, or www.fema.gov and click on 'Plan Ahead' and under 'Prepare for Hazards' click on 'Fire.' Families can also contact their local fire department.

Training Available for January 2009

New User Training

Learn the components of building continuity of operations plans and how to use the Living Disaster Recovery Planning System (LDRPS)

January 7, 2009 8:30-12:00

Test Training & Exercise

Testing your plan is important to the safety of your agency. Learn how to create effective exercises that will help get everyone involved.

January 14, 2009 8:30-12:00

Pandemic Flu Training

A good class for planners & staff! Learn about the types of flu, why pandemic flu is a threat and how we can prepare.

January 28, 2009 8:30-12:00

Workshops

Need an afternoon to work on your COOP with some guidance? Workshops are held after every class session in the DIS training room.

January 7, 2009 1:00-4:00

January 14, 2009 1:00-4:00

January 28, 2009 1:00-4:00

For more ACOOP information, visit our website @ <http://dis.arkansas.gov/security/coop.htm>